United Nations A/HRC/37/NGO/173

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 February 2018

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-seventh session
26 February-23 March 2018
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.18-02521(E)
1802521

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Child abuse

In recent years, there have been many wars and disasters in the Middle East, and many children have suffered greatly from these disadvantages. Lack of inequality and poverty were the subject of many Middle Eastern countries, and wars in many cases have aggravated this. There are many examples of child abuse caused by wars in the Middle East. Iran, as one of the countries in the region, has also been affected by the wars in addition to structural poverty caused by the lack of equitable distribution of resources.

Economic poverty is one of the examples of creating structural child abuse. The lack of access to the high quality nutrition, healthcare, and education in this structure is clearly visible and includes all children, especially asylum seekers. Child labor and the recruitment of children for jobs that are dangerous child labor based on the definition of the World Labor Organization is one of the most serious abuses. Many migrant children in Iran have their jobs in collecting garbage, which often lives alone in the country. Many of their peers in Afghanistan also have the same job that is an example of exploits and enslavement of children.

Since the target group of Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society is the children of the marginalized regions, surveys from these areas to more than 1,000 children who have been subjected to specific physical, psychological, or juggling harassment show that there are a lot of legal vacuum in this area in the country. Many examples of these abuses, such as the sale of children, have not been criminalized, and we see that in many families in these neighborhoods, children are exploited as slave, and in many cases they are sold as marriages. These cases are high among immigrant families and the lack of access of these families to identity papers prevents any possibility of legal action based on the law in force in this area.

The bill on protecting children and adolescents, which can provide a good support for the protection of children at risk in these areas, has been presented to parliament for many years and, despite the acute and terrible cases of child abuse, has not seen significant progress in its adoption.

In total, it can be said that the extent and depth of child abuse experienced by these NGO relief workers in the marginalized areas is not compatible with the existing legal and supportive mechanisms, especially at the executive level. Due to the abundance of this issue, in addition to making laws and strengthening supportive infrastructure, it is necessary to have structures that are specifically required to monitor, to report and to act on child abuse, and have maximum authority in this regard.

Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society is proposing the establishment of a "child abuse watchdog" with the aim of discovering and taking action to prevent or cure the effects of this phenomenon, which is necessary due to the vulnerability of children, lack of possibility to complain and even report to the community.